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MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT:

Gen. Abrams' Appraisal of
Current Military Operations

Attached at Tab A is an April 2 message from General Abrams giving his personal appraisal of the current SVN operations in Cambodia and in the Lam Son 719 area of operations. Following are the highlights:

Cambodia

-- This past week has been marked by renewed enemy resistance to ARVN operations in the Chup Plantation area. Shifting of enemy units to the west, heavy fire attacks against the ARVN along Rt. 7, and increased ground contact in and around Chup indicates continued enemy concern with his rear service facilities in this area.

-- The recent lull in enemy activity probably reflects the need for re-supply and re-groupment after significant ammunition expenditures and personnel losses during initial phases of the operation. Current indications are that the enemy will resist ARVN initiatives in the western areas while avoiding significant contact in the eastern and southern portions of ARVN operations.

-- The SVN have continued a deliberate tempo in their operations, and Gen. Minh has been told of the importance of pressing the enemy in the few weeks left in the dry season in order to undercut their capabilities to interfere with the Presidential election campaign. Gen. Minh has been given an operational plan to keep the pressure on the enemy, and if he accepts this concept, we should see increased activity within two weeks.

-- In a March 29 contact with the enemy, resulting in some 225 NVN KIA our pilots report indications of green, inexperienced troops.

ARMY review completed.

Operation Lam Son 719

-- Enemy activity in this area remained at a low level; there have been no indications of a major attack on Khe Sanh, although a continuation of sapper attacks is anticipated.

-- In Laos the enemy is trying to restore their lines of communication to make up for lost time in the dry season campaign. Reports indicate

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that they are having difficulty clearing the roads of mines, that some combat maneuver forces have been diverted to assist in restoring communication lines, and that they are having difficulty caring for the large number of wounded.

-- The bulk of SVN troops that were in Laos are resting and refitting in the Dong Ha and Hue areas and there is a maximum effort to replace supplies lost during the Laotian campaign.

-- The phasedown of both U.S. and ARVN logistics bases at Khe Sanh was completed on April 1. The coordinated ARVN-US withdrawal of tactical units should be completed about April 7, and while there will be enemy harassments along Route 9, Gen. Abrams does not believe that they will seriously interfere with the withdrawal.

-- The raid into the Laotian salient is planned for sometime between April 6 and 10.

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April 2, 1971

FOR ADM. MOORER AND ADM. MCCAIN

FROM: GEN. ABRAMS

SUBJECT: Commanders Personal Appraisal

1. (U) Reference requested my personal appraisal of progress of current operations and a forecast for the immediate future.

Part I, Operation Toan Thang 01-71NB

2. (C) Enemy situation: renewed enemy resistance to ARVN operations in the Chup Plantation area has highlighted activity in the Toan Thang 01-71NB AO this week. There has been an apparent shift of elements of the 7th NVA Division to the west to reinforce the 9th VC Division in the Chup area. The 209th NVA regiment, 7th NVA division was identified in contact in the vicinity of Suong on 28 March. Additionally, there are indications that elements of the 174th NVA Regiment of the 5th VC Division have also moved west into the Chup area. This shift of enemy units to the west, heavy attacks by fire against ARVN ops along Route 7, west of Route 75, and increased ground contact in and around Chup indicates continued enemy concern with his rear service facilities in this area. The recent lull in enemy initiated activity probably reflects a period of resupply and regroupment necessitated by significant ammunition expenditures and personnel losses during the initial phases of the operation. Current indications are that the enemy will continue to resist in strength ARVN initiatives in the western portion of the AO, while avoiding significant contact and employing economy-of-force tactics in the eastern and southern portions.

3. (S) Friendly situation:

A. As reported last week the operational tempo of III Corps in Cambodia remains deliberate. It has been pointed out to General Minh that the enemy divisions are continuing to receive replacements and thus they increase in combat effectiveness. Moreover, only 6-8 weeks remain in the dry season, and III Corps should strive for maximum enemy attrition both in Cambodia and in MR 3 before the onset of the wet season in order to undercut the enemy's capability to interfere with the Presidential campaign and election. To this end General Minh has been offered an operational plan designed to keep the pressure on the three enemy divisions in Cambodia.

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B. In the contact near Suong on 29 March which resulted in some 225 NVA KIA, our Air Cav pilots report indications of green, inexperienced troops. The NVA were in new uniforms and pith helmets and were caught by the Cav moving across open terrain.

C. On 30 March, General Minh met at Tay Ninh with General In Tam and the Chief of Svay Rient Province. General Minh reports that the meeting was amicable. They discussed Route 1, the threat to Kampong Cham and Phnom Penh, and joint investigation of Vietnamese-Cambodian incidents. Similar meetings will be held twice a month in the future. In regard to the second point, In Tam is prepared to place a FANK brigade of three battalions at the junction of Routes 7 and 15 if ARVN will provide arty support and forces for joint operations. Minh is seeking President Thieu's approval of this plan.

D. In the coming week, ARVN actions will continue to be deliberate with little change in deployment or focus of attention. If General Minh accepts the concept of Operation Provide, the following week should see increased activity.

Part II, Operation Lamson 719

4. (S) Enemy Situation: In the Lamson 719 area of operations, enemy activity remained at a low level and consisted primarily of light attacks by fire and light ground probes along Route 9 in Quang Tri Province. There have been no indications of a major attack on Khe Sanh, although a continuation of sapper attacks is anticipated. In Laos, the enemy is endeavoring to restore the LOC in an attempt to make for time he has lost in his dry season campaign. Reports indicate that he is having difficulty clearing the roads of mines and no traffic has been detected moving through Ban Dong. Some combat maneuver forces have been diverted to assist in the LOC restoration and large number of wounded are taxing his ability to care for them.

5. (S) Friendly situation:

A. There has been considerable repositioning of RVNAF forces during the week with the bulk of the troops which were in Laos returning to Dong Ha and Hue areas for rest and refitting. Gen. Lam has stressed maintenance and refitting for those units out of contact and it is reported that progress is being made.

B. Adequate stockage levels of Class I, III, and V are on hand to support present and future combat operations. Maximum effort is being made to replace losses incurred in Lamson 719. Exact losses are not known at this time as classification of damaged items has not been completed. However, float assets and attrition stocks on hand, plus stocks received in

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theater during the operation will be adequate to replace most of these losses, but float and attrition stocks will have to be reconstituted. The phase-down of both US and ARVN logistics bases at Khe Sanh was completed on 1 April and the airfield facilities have been withdrawn.

C. The coordinated ARVN - US withdrawal of tactical units which began today is expected to be completed on or about 7 April. While the enemy will no doubt continue his harrassing operations along Route 9, I do not believe that he can seriously interfere with the withdrawal.

D. The raid into the Laotian salient is planned for execution between 6-10 April.

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